

My View: Bill Blomquist

Your chance to offer input on infrastructure needs

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Recent articles and editorials in The Star have highlighted the challenges Indianapolis and Marion County face in maintaining and managing the public infrastructure that supports economic development, protects public health and sustains quality of life. At a time when governments are looking to maximize their resources, the city and county are pursuing innovative approaches and examining ways to tackle infrastructure needs.

In his State of the City speech in February, Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard announced the formation of his Infrastructure Advisory Commission, on which I and fellow residents Mike Hudson, Patricia Martin and Todd Stuart are pleased to serve. Charged with reviewing potential long-term solutions to the city's infrastructure needs, the commission has met several times since February and held a public meeting in May.

We are committed to providing recommendations to the mayor about how to improve the quality of the city's roads, sidewalks and bridges. Why is now the time for such discussions? Because more than \$1.5 billion is needed to raise our transportation and neighborhood infrastructure levels to what the Department of Public Works considers "acceptable" condition.

Included in this figure is \$175 million for streets; \$290 million for bridges; \$970 million for curbs and sidewalks; and \$110 million for alley and culverts.

The cost to repair our wastewater and storm-water management systems has been estimated at nearly \$4 billion.

With the total budget for the city projected at \$1.1 billion, and less than \$20 million of that dedicated to repair the items I listed above, one can see how this problem has accumulated over time.

The long-term capital needs of the city aren't limited to transportation. All across Indianapolis and in every line of the budget there are unfunded or underfunded services.

The commission isn't going to come up with a magic solution to these considerable problems. What we are doing, however, is soliciting feedback from citizens, reviewing national and international approaches to infrastructure challenges and discussing their applicability to Indianapolis, and providing recommendations to Mayor Ballard as to how make a permanent and strategic difference in our infrastructure for future generations.

From 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday at the Julia Carson Center, 300 East Fall Creek Parkway, the Infrastructure Advisory Commission will hold a public meeting to discuss infrastructure issues and other relevant topics on the minds of the public. Mayor Ballard will lead the discussion and all the members of the commission will be there. The meeting will later be replayed on Channel 16.

We need your input on these important topics.

We and the mayor realize that financial decisions need to be based on what's best for the city for the next 10 to 50 years.

If you can't make the meeting, please visit our Web site at www.indy.gov/eGov/Mayor/Pages/IAC.